

Rural Focus Group on the Environmental Goals and Policy Report (EGPR) Summary of Activities

Meetings

March 17, 2003

April 22, 2003

June 4, 2003

June 25, 2003 (Upcoming)

What is the Purpose of the Environmental Goals and Policy Report

The purpose of the EGPR is to provide an overview, looking 20 to 30 years ahead, of state growth and development. It will include a statement of approved goals and objectives, including those directed to land use, population growth and distribution, development, the conservation of natural resources, and air and water quality.

In addition, it will advise the Legislature on statutory action required to implement the state's environmental goals and objectives. Finally, statute requires that the EGPR will serve as a basis for judging the design, location and priority of major public programs, capital projects and other actions, including the allocation of state resources for environmental purposes through the budget and appropriation process.

Summary of Work

The Rural Focus EGPR Group parallels the work of the 52 member stakeholder advisory group convened by OPR. The larger stakeholder group includes some rural representation including the California Farm Bureau and the Regional Council of Rural Counties; however, this statewide group did not provide a sufficient forum to hear from all areas and interests of rural California. Comments are considered at the same time and through the same process as the larger stakeholder advisory group.

Summary of Responses to Question One: What is the greatest threat or most troublesome trend facing rural communities in California of the next 20 to 30 years? What can the State do through the EGPR to lessen or eliminate the threat or reverse the trend?

1. Put some objective-decision making information in front of the people making decisions(supervisors)
 - Supervisors don't see beyond the short range.
 - Implications of actions, EGPR could talk about implications of decision makers actions.
 - Take into consideration what certain types of housing mean to future workforce.
 - Not enough focus on the long term.
 - Would be surprised if all 3 of the priorities/E's don't directly relate back to land use decisions.
2. If EGPR raises the bar on what people think about and consider then it will be useful.
 - EGPR should include scenarios/implications of rural decisions.
 - Show people the implications of their decisions.
 - Set up areas of probabilities, show the outcomes of those probabilities.
 - Based on the conditions that you have, here are examples of the implications of your decisions, spelled it all out in the EGPR.
 - If you don't want to be like LA here is what you need to do and here are the implications/costs.

3. Trend in agriculture is toward higher yield crops which use less land.
 - Agricultural land preservation is not in and of itself a positive goal. What matters is whether the type of product and/or growing practices are sustainable.
4. Some real contradictions in how we discuss land use.
 - Lump agricultural land and open space together which is like apples and oranges.
 - If your goal is to preserve agricultural land, then preserve "prime ag land" not ranchland that many times is discussed as agricultural land.
5. Workforce development means life long training opportunities, not just kids in school.
 - Rural problem is that we train them and then they leave.
6. Get a grasp of where you will develop and provide infrastructure for those areas.
7. Preserve the environment?
 - Open space-preserve undisturbed lands.
 - Regional environmental issues, air and water, real costs should include the air and water implications.

Proposed Goal/Objective: The State needs to support the development of and/or provide data that will help communities make more informed local decisions. Suggested Action Items:

- Subsidize the cost of retrieving information from the State Teale Data Center
- Key development agencies like HCD and CALTRANS need to provide extended technical assistance to rural communities on analyzing planning decisions.
- Provide and/or assist communities in obtaining planning money.
- Develop Internet-based tools and resources which support better analysis of local and planning decisions.
- Develop guidelines on analyzing and preparing staff reports on issues which affect the sustainable development in a community.
- Recommend local governments develop a protocol for better identifying "cumulative impacts" of all projects approved and under consideration.

Summary of Responses to Question Two: What is the most important opportunity that rural California must grasp now or lose within the next 10 years? What can the state do to seize that opportunity?

1. Local governments must recognize that they have choices.
2. State needs to set up areas of probabilities and then identify considerations which should be made when making these decisions.
3. Something like a Prop 65 Warnings for rural communities.
4. What are the options and implications?
5. What does preserve the environment mean in rural-Open Space?
6. Are there real opportunities for regional networks in rural areas?

Summary of Responses to Question Three: What do the three planning priorities mean in rural areas? Also, what should the three planning priorities mean?

Planning Priority 1 – Promote Infill and Equity: Infill within a rural context means development within the existing footprint of the community as well as rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and redeveloping previously developed areas. Community means both an incorporated area and a developed unincorporated area. The existing footprint does not necessarily mean within the city limits as city boundaries may or may not accurately reflect the existing footprint of the community. (Draft II)

Comment: We need to go back and add equity and historical preservation.

Planning Priority 2 – Preserve Environmental and Agricultural Resources: Preservation in a rural context means protection and management of California's working landscapes and its most valuable environmental and cultural resources. Sustainable environmental and agricultural practices must integrate a rural communities need to function and prosper as a community, the conditions necessary for a viable working landscape, and adequate management practices for lands set aside from development, as well as, preservation of the resource itself. (Draft II)

Comment: Should we add a definition for real agricultural lands?

Planning Priority 3 – Provide for Efficient Development: Efficient rural development means development occurs within the previously designated urbanized areas of a community, at densities which are the consistent with the character of the community without being exclusionary, are serviced by transit and transportation at a level consistent with other areas of the developed community, and does not leap frog over vacant lands except when the local government have designated these lands as open space within an urbanized area (not buffers). Efficient development does not exclude the development of projects of statewide significance where development away from an urban core is specifically identified as a need for a successful project, i.e. prisons, new state universities, wastewater treatment facilities. (Draft I)

General Comments:

- The EIR dominates the discussion of land use decisions. The EIR only includes a portion of the issues which need to be addressed. More analytical work and discussion should be around economic and social equity impacts of the land use decision.
- Communities need to have ongoing discussions about how they are choosing to grow. Too often growth policies and objectives are ignored after being adopted into the General Plan.

Next Meeting: June 25 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Governor's Office of Planning and Research – 1400 Tenth Street (corner of 10th and N Streets). Please RSVP to Doreen Updike at doreen.updike@opr.ca.gov